

## FILM IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING

The viability of cinema as one of the important arts of our time is no longer in question. In existence less than one hundred years, it has already created a body of incontrovertible masterpieces which testify both to its achievements and its potential. The works of its masters parallel in mastery of style, development of form and subtlety of statement the achievements of the great twentieth century creators in painting, music and literature.

The young, especially, consider film the art of their own century, the one closest to them. It is they who have been the backbone of a constant growth in American film societies, festivals, film schools, publications and film series on campuses -- not to speak of the growing and impressive number of films produced by them in their colleges and universities.

Equally significant has been the rapid evolution and growing importance of film as a medium of education, leading to its ever-increasing utilization by schools, civic groups, universities, churches. Primarily through film, educational television has expanded into a national network and become an increasingly important factor in the cultural and educational life of the country.

Film is also coming of age in our academic institutions. A veritable "explosion" in new courses and new film departments has taken place in colleges nationally, reflecting the tremendous interest in film as art and medium of communication among the student population. A 1971 American Film Institute survey revealed that budgets for film programs in American colleges and universities had increased over 300% in the five years preceding. Over two thousand film courses are presently being taught nationally; more than seventy schools offer a major in film.

It is in this context that the role of film at the University of Pennsylvania must be evaluated.

Campus Film Societies: After an auspicious beginning, the campus at present is ill supplied with regular film showings. Both the PUC and the CA present few and sporadic screenings; large areas of cinema remain totally unshown.

The PUC at its very few showings concentrates, for financial reasons, on large, commercial popular "hits" and limits itself to American Hollywood-type features. The Christian Association does present, in cooperation with International House, some foreign films, also concentrating on high spots (although these frequently are excellent films) and independently, shows a series of social documentaries.

? Films on Television: Many students are turning to films on television, by far the most convenient, cheapest and least demanding type of movie-going on campus. ~~Color television sets can be found in a number of lobbies; and many students have TV sets in their rooms.~~ The programming consists of ordinary television fare: mostly American or British, some foreign, a few excellent films; many of them cut to fit television's time or acceptance parameters.   
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Off-Campus Film Societies: Certain film societies (such as the one at the Walnut, Temple Center City or the Exceptional Film Society) offer good to excellent, but sparse fare and, because of distance and cost are poorly attended by students.

← and very limited advertising



Philadelphia Art Theatres: Philadelphia is not well supplied with "art theatres". Only a few exist, by concentrating on those large, popular commercial films that may be expected to do well, ~~at the box office~~. While these theatres fulfill a valuable function to a limited extent, even the more adventurous among them remain subject to ~~economic box office~~ pressures; they cannot afford to show meritorious films of questionable box office appeal or films by lesser known yet excellent international directors; they must immediately drop a film if attendance is too small; they cannot present programs of shorts, controversial social documentaries or avant-garde films, for fear of antagonizing their customers.

From the students' point of view, all of them operate under two distinct ~~and fateful~~ drawbacks: ticket cost (from \$2 to \$4, with \$3.50 the average for first-runs) and distance. ~~It appears that the student population prefers their entertainment on campus, at prices they can afford.~~

#### WHAT IS MISSING

This brief summary indicates that an important, educationally disastrous vacuum exists at the University in relation to film in a number of precise areas:

a. The great problem of film knowledge and appreciation, study and research is the relative difficulty of access to the material being studied. Books and records can be bought and borrowed; the average student, however, has little access to film.

At the University of Pennsylvania, films are being shown infrequently in a random, educationally unfocused manner, with no attempt at relating them to film as a medium of art and communication, or placing them into a context of ideas and analysis. A systematic approach to the medium is totally lacking; no exhibition center exists at the University devoted to a continuing, comprehensive and integrated display of world cinema.

It is, however, precisely through an establishing of relationships, convergences or contrasts, an analysis of styles, concepts and symbols that an "entertainment" (however "cultural") can be transmuted into an educational experience. What is needed is "relational programming" -- focusing on ideas, genres, tendencies -- and "talk-and-discussion" events in which the film experience can be further clarified.

Neither of these two aspects of the problem are currently being dealt with on campus.

b. Ignorance, the inability to preview films, reliance on popular appeal, cultural conformism and a perhaps not unexpected inclination toward box office values prevent ~~even~~ campus film society planners from utilizing many of the major areas of contemporary cinema. A very large (and constantly growing) number of films of this kind are ~~totally absent from their programs.~~ It is no longer "daring" to show Fellini and Bunuel; the University, as a place for educational and cultural innovation and contemporary relevance must now, in cinema, concern itself also with Fassbinder, Makavejev, Herzog and Rivette, even if in their initial exposure, the relative "obscurity" (to existing student audiences) of these new directors limits attendance to less than for CATCH 22.

c. There is a total absence of short film programs on campus (except for Sol Worth's series). This is an unpardonable omission.

Literally hundreds of outstanding shorts in all areas of human endeavor and knowledge exist, whose use could significantly contribute to the University's educational programs; each year additional scores of outstanding shorts are added internationally --



documentaries, psychological, scientific studies, films on literature and history, linguistics and world peace, newsreel compilations and interviews with artists, intellectuals and political leaders. There are films in the field of ethnology, astronomy, medicine, physics, utilizing high-speed, time-lapse, X-ray photography or cine-microscopy; films on folk art or important contemporary painters; propaganda films, films as social records, animated films utilizing cut-outs, hand-drawn films made without a camera, collage and computer films.

d. Equally absent from current programs, and equally important, are the works of the international film avant-garde, concentrating on an exploration of the plastic and kinetic elements of this unique time art. ~~through whose analysis one may explore their latent or explicit "meaning" in sociological, psychological, philosophical terms.~~ || ?

e. Absent also are a systematic investigation of the classic cinema, emphasizing genres and tendencies rather than isolated and well-worn masterpieces. (discussions, exhibitions, symposia)

f. Absent except in very rare instances are in-person appearances of the artists and craftsmen, the critics and theoreticians of cinema. ~~all of whom could be attracted to the University for discussions, symposia, seminars, informal talks and showings of works in progress.~~ ?

It is therefore my conclusion that this manifold vacuum at the University must be filled by the re-establishment of a campus Cinematheque, such as existed at the Annenberg School and Center until recently.

? Such a center would make it possible to present a wide variety of programs and projects ~~not feasible to primarily profit-oriented ventures (limited by their very nature to the simple exhibition of popular motion pictures)~~ programs that would continuously support and open new areas presently unacceptable, unavailable or even unknown to the commercial cinema and the existing film societies.

What is required is a continuous program of screenings open to the students which would be organized in an educationally meaningful, thematically and/or stylistically related way, stressing the powerful inherent capability of this visual medium to transmit ideas and change consciousness, ~~by the utilization of its specific qualities and attributes.~~

Its programs must be flexible and varied, to avoid both the staid monotony of old-style academicism, and to allow full scope to the unbridled vitality of the medium. Generally speaking, they could be organized in series; comparing and contrasting films of the same genre, tracing the development or treatment of particular ideas, interest areas or concepts; surveying the work of national schools or stylistic movements; following the development of individual directors as it relates to particular social and philosophical tendencies; presenting new trends in contemporary cinema and analyzing their relevance and social context.

Throughout the year, there would also take place a number of single events: films or in-person appearances, which, by their nature, fall outside the range of "related" series presentations.

Given the educational and non-profit nature of the enterprise, it would be possible to present certain films not in American distribution, films no longer in distribution, special previews of new films or even premieres and otherwise unavailable films from international film archives. The latter could become an important source of (possibly free) films.



~~discussions~~  
Seminars

The establishment of both informal and formal occasions for ~~talk events~~, interviews and symposia is an integral part of this plan and could include unrehearsed, spontaneous discussions, as well as more formal lectures ~~(with slide or film illustrations)~~, presentations of new techniques or works in progress with comments by filmmaker and/or critics.

The availability at the Annenberg School and Center of halls of varying sizes and even open public areas is of inestimable value to this aspect of the program.

There is no doubt that out-of-town "commercial" and independent filmmakers, critics and film intellectuals could be attracted to the Center to participate in these events.

Likewise, certain special events, series or even Festivals presented elsewhere in America (or abroad) could undoubtedly be "imported" by the Cinematheque.

The Center must be integrally and fruitfully related to the educational and artistic life of the University as a whole; wherever possible, non-film faculty should be drawn into the discussions and symposia, screening schedules related to special University events or institutes and the relevance of film to (seemingly unrelated) disciplines stressed by force of example. Inter-disciplinary "cross-fertilization" is not merely valuable in itself; it also provides an antidote to the frequent provincialism of the professional film as well as non-film scene.

The appearance of this new kind of programming on campus will pose film -- for the first time directly -- as an intellectual and aesthetic challenge; it will strengthen the University's curriculum and enrich existing film society programming, ~~henceforth view-  
able in a wider context, eliciting unexpected new relationships and responses. # ?~~  
and reinforce

It is also clear that the Cinematheque, by virtue of its programs, will be able to attract to itself significant elements in Philadelphia's cultural and artistic life, not to speak of students ~~from Drexel, Temple and other~~ <sup>local</sup> schools. This significant "reaching out" into the community will in turn provide the University with a focused and defined identity so necessary for its organic growth.

The various elements here enumerated will not come into being overnight, but are implicit in the concept of a Cinematheque and will emerge with the passage of time.

The first and most challenging priority of the Cinematheque will be to build its own identity and thereby create the confidence so necessary for audience growth, until the programs will have proven themselves "in action" so that any film presented by the Cinematheque will carry with it an invisible seal of seriousness, quality and relevance. There is no doubt that this will take time, staff, financial resources and a great deal of effort; nor is there any doubt that this can and will be achieved.

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